

# THE ETHICAL HUNTER



## THEN

Our prehistoric ancestors were hunters. To them, animals were as sacred as life itself. A good hunt assured survival.

Paleolithic cave paintings discovered in Europe expressed early man's reverence and gratitude for the animals that sustained life. It is believed that this animal art symbolized assurance of the success of the hunt.

The famous Lascaux caves in southern France are a sanctuary of paintings that have endured for more than 17,000 years. These ancient cave paintings depict the vital grace of deer, bulls, horses and the figures of our ancestral hunters relying on intelligence and tools of stone, wood and bone to conquer the animals they revered. This ancient art tells the story of how cooperating in the hunt helped to shape our basic societies.

Back then, hunters and the game they sought were inseparable. Human existence and hunting were one.



## NOW

Today, few of us hunt to survive. As modern hunters, our role is to ensure the survival of wildlife. We have properly assumed responsibility for our natural heritage and strive to practice an ethical standard similar to that of our ancestors.

Our cooperative efforts are evident in a host of organizations that benefit wildlife. The license fees and taxes hunters pay contribute to a significant portion of the nation's conservation funding — from habitat restoration to research.

Though our tools are more efficient than those of our ancestors, as ethical hunters, we avoid the use of technology that would place the game we hunt at an unfair disadvantage. We abide by ethical standards to preserve the challenge of the hunt.

We honor the majesty of wildlife and wilderness and respect the game we take. We are not wasteful. We understand the difference between right and wrong and behave accordingly because we appreciate the opportunity and privilege to encourage and preserve the continuation of our ancient role as hunters.



### THE ETHICAL HUNTER PLEDGE

**We will be ethical hunters, worthy of our hunting tradition.**



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## BE AN ETHICAL HUNTER

### PREPAREDNESS

Hunting well is synonymous with good hunting. Ethical hunters practice their shooting skills, prepare themselves for the physical demands of the hunt, review the rules of firearm safety, select equipment equal to the dignity of the game and maintain their firearms properly to assure functional reliability. They also review wildlife identification and behavior often.

### COMPANIONS

Ethical hunters choose their hunting companions with care. They must share a commitment to responsible behavior and be bound by mutual consideration.



It is important that they share a willingness to sacrifice selfish interests and lend a helping hand in times of difficulty. With good companions, there are no bad days afield.

### LANDOWNER RELATIONS

Hunting on someone else's land is a privilege, not a right. The ethical hunter always asks for permission, follows the owner's wishes and leaves the property as it was found.

Expressing thanks for the owner's hospitality, maybe with a gift from the game bag, is a common courtesy that can go a long way toward securing land access again and establishing



good hunter-landowner relations in the future.

### GAME

Understanding wildlife behavior is crucial to hunting success and adds immeasurably to respecting the hunt even when no game is taken. When skill and tireless determination result in the opportunity to shoot, the ethical hunter never takes more game than can be used. If they can, ethical hunters use well-trained dogs to help find downed game. Properly field dressing and cleaning game assures that game is never wasted. Skill, patience and respect enhance the total hunting experience.



If we can act when alone as though a crowd were watching, we will be

**STRONGER.**

If we can calculate our hunting achievements in terms of memories earned instead of shots fired, our days afield will be

**RICHER.**

If we can cherish each hunting day without regard for its result, we will be

**HAPPIER.**

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### NON-HUNTERS

Non-hunters are critically important to the future of hunting. Most non-hunters are tolerant, but will be less so if forced to confront displays of dead game or see people in hunting clothes behaving in disrespectful ways. Ethical hunters are defined by their own sense of respect, honor, safety and fairness. Hunters who behave irresponsibly pose a greater threat to the future of hunting than any anti-hunting group. Bad impressions are difficult to change.

### THE HUNTER'S LAW

Two types of law govern the ethical hunter's actions. One is written — the other is not. One is governmentally enforced — the second is based on morality. Both types of law apply with equal force to all hunters.

The amount of game taken, for example, is limited by formal regulation, as well as by self-restraint. Those who break the written law by poaching must be reported. Those who break the unwritten law by shooting at excessively long range, using inadequate equipment or neglecting to prepare themselves for the hunt must be corrected.



Hunting is as old as humankind and as new as tomorrow.

We will continue to hunt for as long as we honor the game, shoulder our fair burden of responsibility for the natural world and require more of ourselves than others require of us.



The National Shooting Sports Foundation (NSSF) is the trade association for the firearms, hunting and recreational shooting sports industry. Find out more about how NSSF supports programs designed to ensure the future of hunting and the hunter and conservation at [nssf.org](http://nssf.org).

